

Witness Statement

Criminal Procedure Rules, r 27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s. 9; Magistrates' Court Act 1980. s.5B

Statement Of: Suzanne Badham

URN:

Age (If Under 18): Over 18

Occupation: Police Officer

1 10/03/2020 20:44:

I am PC 21007 Suzanne Badham of Hampshire Constabulary currently based at Southampton Civic Centre on the Southampton Central Neighbourhood Policing Team. I have worked in Southampton City Centre for 13 years and for the past 2 years I have been the lead officer for Op Hem which is the management of Street Prostitution in Southampton.

Southampton is the only place in Hampshire which has 'on street' sex workers, and this has been the case for many years. Back in the early 1980's, sex working used to take place outside the residential properties of Derby Road. Sex workers used to solicit outside these properties as they lived there and/or advertised their services from them using red lights.

In the 1990's the focus of sex work had changed, the motivation for sex working changed, funding drug and alcohol addictions became the primary reason women were selling sex on the street. Sex workers were encouraged not to work in residential areas, punters were less willing to come to the residential areas to obtain services and by moving to a more industrial area of the City the sex workers were less likely to get stopped by Police.

The on street sex workers moved to the industrial area of Empress Road and this remains the 'Red Light District' to date. The Red Light District of Southampton is extremely well known locally, Nationally and even Internationally, it includes Empress Road, Imperial Road, Horseshoe Bridge and a number of smaller roads stemming off Empress Road.

Running between Empress Road and Mount Pleasant Road (Mount Pleasant Road runs parallel in part to Empress Road) is an alleyway. This alleyway is approximately 30 metres long. On one side of the alleyway the land is occupied by a company called Wessex Cleaning Equipment, the other is occupied by Mount Pleasant Junior School and a small area of grassland. The alleyway has wire mesh fencing along either side and can be accessed from Mount Pleasant Road or Empress Road. Mount Pleasant School occupies an area of land which is bordered by Empress Road, Imperial Road, Mount Pleasant Road and the alleyway. The alleyway affords a user a minimal saving of time if cutting through from Mount Pleasant Road to Empress Road or vice versa, without the alleyway a person would have to walk round the boundary of the school which would add around 5 minutes or so to a journey depending on the speed they walk.

35 The alleyway is favoured by the street sex workers working on Empress Road. It has

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minimal lighting, and vegetation along either side of the alleyway reduces the likelihood of their activities being seen by passers-by. The alleyway is used by the street sex workers to carry out their business but also as a place where they and other drug users use their drugs as they are less likely to be seen by passing Police vehicles.

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There are approximately 45 - 50 active sex workers working in the Red Light District currently and the alleyway is regularly used by a number of the working girls during the hours of darkness. It has also been known for the working girls to carry out their soliciting in and around the alleyway during daytime hours as well, even when school children are making their way to school.

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Due to the working girls using the alleyway to conduct their sexual activities, there is often evidence of these activities left behind. It is common to find used condoms littering the alleyway, or sometimes these are thrown over the fence and in to the school grounds. It is also common to find used uncapped needles littering the floor of the alleyway, and again, often needles and other drug paraphernalia are thrown over the fences with little regard for the children attending school.

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The alleyway is regularly used by the sex workers late at night and in the early hours of the morning when there are fewer people passing by. Due to the low levels of lighting and the fact that it is relatively hidden away from view, this increases the risk of attack to the sex workers. Recently there have been a number of attacks on sex workers in the alleyway, these attacks have resulted in nasty assault injuries and one woman being raped. The alleyway is notorious for drug usage, prostitution, unsavoury characters lurking, an area rife for crime and disorder and for being unsafe. From carrying out a survey with local residents and businesses, many people stated that they actively avoid walking through the alleyway both during the day and the evening.

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Closing off the alleyway to the public would greatly reduce the risk to the sex workers, it would also reduce the risk to public health as there would no longer be condoms and needles being discarded in a public walkway. It would reduce the amount of drug paraphernalia and 'sex litter' in the area and stop it being thrown in to the school grounds and surrounding business premises. I believe that closing the alleyway would be beneficial to the local area and am supportive of any action in order to make this happen.

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This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true

Signature Witness: Digitally signed Date: 10/03/2020 23:09

Witness To Signature: N/A Date: N/A

Statement Started 10/03/2020 20:44 Statement Completed 10/03/2020 23:09